

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1999 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is conducted as part of a national survey effort by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This effort has included similar surveys conducted in 39 states, four territories, and 16 cities over the past ten years. Additional questions were added by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Department of Health and Family Services to measure issues of special interest to Wisconsin. The 1999 Wisconsin YRBS report details study methodology, including questionnaire design, sampling, administration, and analysis. The report includes findings in the following areas: assets, unintentional injuries, weapons and violence, suicide, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, sexual behavior, and diet and exercise. It includes an analysis of the relationship between risk behaviors and assets, and provides important comparisons across time. In addition, the report includes important comparisons with the 1997 National YRBS prevalence rates, which was the latest national YRBS data available at the time of the analysis.

A stratified random sample of classrooms in all public schools with ninth through twelfth grades was taken. The YRBS was administered to 1,336 students in 46 public high schools in Wisconsin in the spring of 1999. The students who participated in the survey are representative of students in Wisconsin. The results of this survey can be used to make important inferences concerning the health-risk behavior of all Wisconsin public high school students in grades 9 through 12.

Assets

- Students expressed generally high levels of assets in social support, expectations, positive values, social competencies and grades.
- The protective power of assets was demonstrated by the negative correlations such assets had with alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, violence, sexual activity and risky use of vehicles.
- In general positive values and grades demonstrated the most protective power.
- In general, female students possessed more assets than male students.

Unintentional Injuries

- Thirty-eight percent of students reported riding with a driver who had been drinking at least once in the past month.
- Twenty-eight percent of high school seniors drove after drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.
- Both motorcycle and bicycle helmet use increased between 1993 and 1999.
- Male students reported higher risk behaviors than female students on every unintentional injury measure.

Weapons and Violence:

- The proportion of students carrying weapons on school grounds decreased significantly since 1993, from nine to six percent. This decrease is largely due to reduction in male students carrying weapons at school, which decreased from 15 to 8 percent.
- The percentage of students who reported being in a fight both anywhere and on school property decreased significantly between 1993 and 1999, from 39 percent to 31 percent and from 16 percent to 11 percent.
- Students in Wisconsin are significantly less likely to report being in a physical fight on school property than the national average (10 percent compared to 15 percent).

- Four percent of students reported that they had stayed home at least one day in the past 12 months because they felt unsafe either going to school or while at school.
- About one in ten students reported being threatened because of their race in the past year. One in twenty students reported being threatened because someone thought they were lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- Ten percent of students report ever having been verbally or physically forced to take part in sexual activity.
- About four in ten female students report ever having been sexually harassed at school.

Suicide

- More than a quarter of high school students reported being depressed in the past year.
- More than a quarter of high school students seriously considered committing suicide in the past year.
- Female students are more likely than male students to have depression and to consider and attempt suicide.

Tobacco

- Thirty-eight percent of students reported smoking at least once in the past month.
- Wisconsin students who are current smokers are more likely to report smoking on 20 or more of the past 30 days than the national average.
- Incidence of current smoking increased between 1993 and 1999 from 32 percent to 38 percent.
- The percentage of students who had ever smoked who have tried to quit smoking increased substantially between 1993 and 1999.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

- Over half of all students reported having had at least one alcoholic beverage in the past 30 days. Very few students (four percent) reported drinking on school grounds.
- The proportion of students who reported having had five or more drinks at one time in the past month increased to 34 percent in 1999 from 29 percent in 1993. Two-thirds of students who had drunk in the past month drank five or more drinks at one time.
- There was a slight increase from 1993 to 1999 among students who said that they had never drunk alcohol from 20 percent to 23 percent.
- Students in Wisconsin are less likely to have ever used marijuana than the national average (40 percent compared to 47 percent).
- Slightly more than one-fifth (20 percent) of all students reported using marijuana in the past 30 days
- Students in 1999 were significantly more likely to have used marijuana in the past thirty days than students in 1993. This rose from 11 percent to 22 percent.
- Students in 1999 were significantly more likely to have reported using cocaine ever in their lives than students in 1993. This rose from five percent to nine percent.
- Students in 1999 were significantly more likely to have someone offer, sell or give them illegal drugs at school than students in 1993. This rose from 20 percent to 29 percent.

Sexual Behavior

- Forty-four percent of students reported that it is important to them to delay having sexual intercourse until they are married, engaged or are an adult in a long-term, committed relationship.

- Those who expressed a commitment to abstinence expressed more responsible behaviors on nearly every measure.
- Wisconsin students were less likely to report having had sexual intercourse before the age of 13 than the national average (four percent compared to seven percent).
- Six in ten students reported never having had sexual intercourse.
- The percentage of students who reported having ever had sexual intercourse significantly decreased between 1993 and 1999 from 47 to 42 percent. However, among those who are sexually active, the percentage who reported sexual intercourse in the past three months increased from 69 to 74 percent from 1993 to 1999.
- Six out of ten sexually active students reported using a condom the last time they had sex. Condom use decreases as grade increases.

Diet and Exercise

- Fourteen percent of all students were overweight according to their Body Mass Index.
- Female students were more likely than male students to report being overweight and were twice as likely to report trying to lose weight.
- Only 61 percent of students consumed the recommended amount of fruits, 15 percent consumed the recommended amount of vegetables, and 45 percent consumed the recommended amount of dairy products.
- Sixty percent of students said that they had exercised or participated in physical activity for at least 20 minutes on three or more of the past seven days.

Relationships between Risk Factors

- Strong correlations exist among alcohol and other drug use, tobacco use, and vehicle safety.
- Sexual activity is weakly correlated with alcohol use and is strongly correlated with other drug use, tobacco use, violence, and taking risks with vehicle safety.
- Violence is correlated with alcohol and other drug use, sexual activity, suicide, tobacco use and vehicle safety.